



South Region Virtual Open Forum Q&As

8th July 2021

Staff in attendance:

- Emily Thomson - Regional Head of Housing (South Region)
- Lauren Picton - Sustainment and Partnerships Manager
- Louisa Guest & Coco Nash - Leasehold Manager & Senior Property Management Officer
- David McLean - Asset Lead (Repairs)
- Kindy Bansal-Shah - Head of Building Safety (Remediation)
- Tanya Basse - Resident Involvement Manager (Project Manager)

Video link: <https://youtu.be/1VePTuxCRd8>

Questions and Answers:

Question/Query	Answer
Does South have 9,000 properties?	Yes, this includes leaseholders.
If Wates have brought in extra resources to deal with repairs, will more be needed to cover K&C?	Westminster is a new Wates contract with separate resources to K&C. Additional resources are only needed in Westminster.
Please ensure that ALL contractors have Photo ID.	All contractors should. If any do not, please inform your housing officer and we will take that up with the contractor.
Can you clarify what a credit vote is in relation to a contractor's poor service?	If we pay a contractor but they fail to deliver on that service, we would ask them to return the payment. In turn, we would pass those savings back to a resident. So, what we would be establishing is if there has been a complete failure to carry out the work that has been paid for. If you would like specific examples, please get in contact with your housing officer.

	<p>Are social housing residents supposed to pay service charges for private bulk refuse collections arranged by NHG for individual residents with issues around hoarding?</p>	<p>If we can identify the person that has left the refuse, then we would seek to recharge them directly for the cost of collection. Where this is not possible, we will seek to recoup the costs via service charges. We will always write to residents reminding them of the correct way to dispose of bulk refuse and then cost implications if this is not followed.</p>
	<p>Are we entitled to compensation for poor service?</p>	<p>NHG has a clear complaints policy and offers compensation in line with this for service failure. If you could like a copy of the policy, please check our website or speak to your housing officer.</p>
	<p>Emily mentioned estate resident monitors. How does a resident take on that role?</p>	<p>If you would like to become an estate monitor, please let your housing officer know. They will then inform our estates team who will set you up with an introductory letter, inspection guide and links and start texting you and emailing monthly.</p>
	<p>Has there been any update on the investigation regarding the fire in March at Zapotec house?</p>	<p>Thank you for raising your concern. One of the bins in the communal space was set fire to. We have been unable to identify the perpetrator. The bin was removed by our estate contractors, and we have requested that the doors be changed to make this space less accessible to the general public. Tom (housing officer) held a meeting with residents about this in May.</p>
	<p>How does NHG deal with residents who are hoarders and attracting rodents, i.e., mice and rats to the building, which affects other residents?</p>	<p>This can be difficult. Often, we find that people who hoard have support needs, or a mental health issue. We look to work with support workers in the local area or the borough to find out what the issue is and what could be causing the hoarding. We try and gain access to the property, which sometimes can prove difficult however, once we gain access, we look at the risks, including fire safety. This depends on the level of hoarding, but we work with the local authority and in most cases, although it isn't the housing association's responsibility, we do look to clear the property and then carry out pest control treatment to prevent rodents getting into other properties. It's not straightforward and does take time, especially when there are mental health issues to consider. In the first instance we look to engage with other family members, but if this is not possible we may need to take legal action. The aim here wouldn't be to end the tenancy but rather to gain access to the property to carry out the works to make it safe and to deal with any vermin issues, as well as providing support to the resident. We work with a company called Cloud Send and have floating housing officers in each area who don't have an assigned patch and therefore are able to spend more intensive time working with hoarders or the residents in the block to manage any specific issues.</p>

	<p>What is happening regarding Notting Hill Genesis visiting residents? Are staff vaccinated and if not, what is happening? What is the process?</p>	<p>We are operating as normal now that restrictions have lifted and part of that means that we are carrying out annual visits to residents' homes. We still ask our staff to be cautious and wear masks to protect themselves and our residents. If anyone has a concern, then we will work around this and try to provide as much support and reassurance as possible. Most staff have been vaccinated but this is not something that Notting Hill Genesis has mandated.</p>
	<p>How quickly can I expect my housing officer to reply to my queries?</p>	<p>On the whole, housing officers should be responding to queries within 24 hours. Residents can contact their housing officer through My Account, and housing officers are expected to respond within 20 hours (they are monitored on whether they are meeting this target). Communication can be slightly different if you email your housing officer and they're on annual leave for example, as there would be no one monitoring their email inbox, so that's why we encourage residents to use My Account because that contact is visible to everyone within the organisation and ensures that any communication that comes in is picked up. We also have certain time frames around complaints: there is a 10-working day response time. But if you submitted a complaint, you should receive acknowledgement within 24 hours.</p>
	<p>What would be the scope / purpose of the visit?</p>	<p>The scope or purpose of visits can be for many reasons. It may be that you've requested us to come out and look at a repair in your property, but in terms of the annual visit, this is just a discussion to just to find out how things are going. The conversation may be about any benefits issues if you're on benefits and looking at whether we can offer you more assistance around welfare support. It would also be an opportunity for us to find out if there have been any changes in your household. In the 12 to 18 months since we've seen you, you may have had more children, or unfortunately someone in your household may have passed away. Children might have moved out or gone to university, so it's about finding out who is living there at the moment and whether the details we have about you are correct.</p> <p>The other purpose is for us to check the property, find out if it's ok and whether there are any repairs needed. Also, since the new social housing white paper has been published, there are certain things that we now need to do to ensure that our properties are compliant. So, coming in asking you questions around fire alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, things like that are really just to have an open, honest conversation with you about how we can support you more and also to find out what's going on with the property.</p>

<p>Could you briefly elaborate on what each of the satisfaction areas represent?</p>	<p>There are five customer satisfaction areas where we seek feedback from residents on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General satisfaction: how satisfied you were with the overall service received from your Housing Officer 2. Customer Effort: how easy was it for you to contact your housing officer 3. Advisor Manner: how would you rate the manner of your housing officer (e.g. Were they polite? Did they show empathy?) 4. Ownership: how you would rate your housing officer in taking ownership of the issues you raised. 5. Next Steps: did your housing officer tell you what would happen next and when it would happen? <p>The scores are out of 10 and get a percentage score between zero and 100. This is then measured for each housing officer, team and wider region.</p>
<p>Where there have been significant delays around communal repair and poor estate management, NHG have cited obstacles associated to the Covid-19 pandemic for delays. However, residents are still paying service charges for communal services and facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>At what point does NHG take action where there is persistent failure by a department or contractor to meet its contractual obligations.</p>	<p>As Louisa said in her presentation, we have had a change in our estate contractor and across the board we have noticed a dip in contractor performance since moving to Just Ask. Residents are currently rating the service for grounds maintenance around 50% satisfaction. Internal cleaning is still high at around 80% satisfaction, but external cleaning has dropped to just above 70% so there is work needed there.</p> <p>We are continuing to meet with Just Ask twice a week in order to find out what is causing these problems and address any specific issues on each estate. But alongside that, if we don't get the improvements that we want for all of you, we would have to put the contractor on an action plan, and failing that we would seek credit notes for the services that we and you are paying for.</p> <p>Although we have been impacted by Covid over the last year, we should still be carrying out estate services and communal repairs.</p>
<p>Who is the head of social housing in the south?</p>	<p>Emily Thomson</p>
<p>Where there is compensation owed to a resident for service failure and they are in arrears, can residents choose whether compensation is credited to their arrears or paid directly to them?</p>	<p>We have a clear compensation policy for service failure. This could be anything from not receiving an update on time, or if you submitted a complaint and we did not respond in the correct time frame, or poor service around estate maintenance etc. We have a policy, and we follow that when responding to residents' complaints and queries.</p>

Our policy states 'If you have arrears on your account (current rent or service charge or former tenancy debt), any compensation will usually be paid into your account to reduce or eliminate the debt. If the amount of compensation exceeds the level of arrears, the additional amount can either be paid directly to you or into your rent account to leave a credit. We will confirm with you how you wish to receive any surplus credit.'

How do you deal with noise pollution?

In the first instance, noise pollution (from music or similar) would be dealt with as a neighbourhood dispute, and your housing officer would contact you to discuss your concerns and see if you are able to resolve this yourself by letting your neighbour aware of the impact that the noise is having on you.

If this isn't possible, we might look at what other methods we could use, such as mediation. If the noise is being caused by another resident in the building, the housing officer will speak to them to find out why they might be playing music or putting a washing machine on etc. at a certain time, and then working with you both to try to come to an agreement.

If the noise pollution is more serious and could be considered antisocial behaviour, then the housing officer would discuss with you what happened, when it happened and whether this is a recurring issue. If it is something that is recurring, then we would work with the local authority and the environmental team. We don't operate neighbourhood patrol services so we aren't available in the evening, but we do rely on the environmental team to come out and listen to what is happening outside of office hours, and we would ask that you also keep a diary of the instances that are occurring. Our aim here would be to support you but also take action against the perpetrator. This would start with issuing the perpetrator with warning letters before taking a more formal course of legal action.

All of this takes time and isn't instantly resolved, but it does depend on the level of anti-social behaviour that might be happening, and we would work with local authorities and the police on the appropriate course of action for that specific situation.

	<p>How do I find out who my property management officer is? Is that the same person as the housing officer of the other tenants in the house?</p>	<p>The property management officer should be on the sign in sheets for the block, or on the communal noticeboards. If this is not available, residents can call our customer service centre and clarify who the housing or property management officer is. In predominantly social housing blocks where there are a few leaseholders, the housing officer serves both social rented and leaseholder tenures.</p> <p>If you are in a block where there are five or more leaseholders, then a property management officer manages this.</p>
	<p>In relation to compensation, if a resident association raises a formal complaint on behalf of their association on issues related to communal service failure, can compensation be awarded directly to the residents' association?</p>	<p>No. The compensation would be payable to the residents directly rather than to the association. The compensation here would provide remuneration for a service failure and as such it would not be appropriate to pay it to the association.</p>
	<p>Is there a designated complaints department/officer to direct formal complaints to? The complaints policy doesn't provide this information.</p>	<p>No. Complaints are directed to the housing or property management officer for them to respond to directly. This is because they have the knowledge and experience to respond to queries in their patch. The only exception to this would be if the complaint is about the housing or property management officer. In these cases, their line manager would respond.</p>
	<p>Our house (five flats) doesn't get cleaned inside. Who is responsible? The residents? Or Notting Hill Genesis?</p>	<p>If no service charge is being paid then the responsibility lies with the residents.</p>
	<p>What's the fire safety plan for Southbank Place?</p>	<p>This should be discussed directly with your local officer. However, the appropriate notices should be displayed prominently throughout your block.</p>
	<p>Are CCTV on buildings networked directly to Notting Hill Genesis?</p>	<p>CCTV is either accessible from site or remotely, depending on the technology installed/on the estate.</p>

<p>A statement, not a question. The staff at Battersea Reach are fantastic overall so praise should be given in addition to talking about complaints. The only thing to ask is about how recycling is being managed. We appear to be mixing general waste with recycling and told that the designated staff are sorting things out at the other end. This process sounds laborious and dare I say not very hygienic/safe. Are there are standard rules that should be followed with regards to waste / recycling management?</p>	<p>There is not a specific policy regarding estate waste. Councils dictate what waste collections are available to estates within boroughs. If residents are not sorting waste in appropriate areas, this may not be collected by council waste services.</p>
<p>How can residents give feedback about the choice of contractors such as Just Ask, and the specs they are meant to follow before the contracts are signed? At Peckham Place the service from Just Ask has been appalling (zero gardening, the grass is over a foot long). We want to feed into future contract decisions rather than having them imposed on us.</p>	<p>Any feedback about contractors should be given to your property management officer.</p>
<p>I have been trying to contact the Resale team since Monday and no response. What should the response time be? I have a buyer for my property, and I need to know what I need to do next.</p>	<p>Please raise a Local Officer Contact or Complaint case via the online portal.</p>
<p>I reported back in March to my property management officer that there is water leakage on my basement wall. I sent pictures and to date, no response. It has gotten worse. I am a leaseholder. I said I would pay for trace and access but wanted compensation if fault lies with other tenants in building. Since then, no response.</p>	<p>Please raise a Local Officer Contact or Complaint case via the online portal. Any leak within a leaseholder's own property, is for the leaseholder to investigate and confirm initially (should a communal origin not be immediately identifiable).</p> <p>Should a leak be found to be coming from another property or a communal source, a leaseholder may be able to claim on the buildings insurance for trace & access, as well as making good.</p>

	<p>Just Ask have not been maintaining the grounds of our development and this has been flagged by many people within the complex. As they are not completing the works as per their contract, yet we are paying for them will this be reviewed so residents receive a refund on the service charge?</p>	<p>Any poor performance from a regular contracted service needs to be flagged to your property management officer to discuss with the contractor for remediation. If upon notice issues are not swiftly rectified, then further discussion may be engaged about any reimbursements of costs. Any refund agreed would be included in the overall reconciliation of service charge accounts between budget to actual spend published 6 months after the financial year end.</p> <p>A credit to residents would depend on whether there was an overall under spend in the service charge accounts. So a refund may reduce a deficit or contribute to a credit.</p> <p>All service charge account end of year deficit recovery or credit reimbursement is processed at the end of year, so leaseholders would not see any immediate reduction to ongoing monthly charges they may pay.</p>
	<p>The estimate for my service charges is incorrect. There are charges for services we do not receive. How long do I have to wait before service charge is adjusted? Can I underpay until matter is corrected? I am a leaseholder.</p>	<p>If the service charge estimates have services which are not present on the estate, this needs to be flagged to your property management officer. They may perform a mid-year estimate revision if possible or estimates may remain the same, but any unspent money would be given back to residents.</p> <p>The terms of the lease will confirm how the service charge should be paid, even when under dispute.</p>
	<p>At the Manor Place Development, we have ongoing issues with vagrancy, theft from outdoor areas and drug use. What is Notting Hill Genesis doing to ensure the safety of residents and preventing the area from being used in this antisocial manner?</p>	<p>Please contact your PMO directly or raise a Local Officer Contact case via the online portal.</p>
	<p>When I signed the Leasehold for my flat, I was told that the interiors would be redecorated at the end of 2019/beginning of 2020 and that the funds for that were already there. However, the redecoration (new carpets, painting of walls etc.) hasn't happened yet. I was told this was due to Covid. How do I find out when it will happen?</p>	<p>Please contact your PMO directly or raise a Local Officer Contact case via the online portal.</p>

NHG communication has been particularly poor, it is interesting you mention it. My main issue with it is we do not get replies on issues or we get pushed into a process that doesn't get an answer. I am still waiting for confirmation of my defects period and significant design flaws with drainage on my balcony. It would be great to get your support.

Please contact your warranty provider directly using the policy number / certificate provided at sale. Please contact the PMO directly or raise a Local Officer Contact or Complaint case via the online portal.

